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REPLY TO DISTRICT OFFICE

20734

January 7, 1966

Hon. Joseph Tydings
U.S. Seante
Washington, D.C.

Dear Seantor Tydings,

Your letter of January 5, which I take to be a form, leaves me disquieted and unsatisfied. It is not responsive to the things I said and in itself it is an inadequate statement. I presume that it is in reply to my letters of both the 11th. and 19th. of December. In both of these letters Ixwas specific in referring to our committments under the Geneve agreements and other things to which you make no reference. I fear that in history our country and this administration will be judged not by the unilaterel "committments" made to our puppets, which have no more standing than promises we make ourselves, but to our official and binding obligations made officially by Ambassador Smith and reaffirmed by Secretary Dulles. Our consistent and ill-considered violation of this pledged word, the basis of the end of the war, is one of the most shameful and at the same time most stupid errors our country has ever made, for there is one thing worse than xxxxxx "failure" that could befall us - "success".

On your trip to South Viet Name, without doubt you saw what the military wanted you to see and some other things that could have concerned you, such as the facilities and equipment available to our men, their morale, and things like that. What lies behind this war you could not see; nor could you see its objective. In your letter I note you say what our objectives are not. It would be constructive to have an honest and credible statement of what they are. This you do not give. And your version of what they are not is at variance with both the statements and conduct of our military. No territory or military garrison? They why are we paying through the nose for the most expensive kinds of permanent military installations? Our action is "appropriately limited"? By the involvement of another fascist government government, in Thailand? By violations of the territorial if not political integrity of Laos and Cambodia? By the imbolvement of other countries? And we do not "want to destroy North Viet Nam, merely persuade it to stop making war against its neighbor". Here, Senator, you reveal you haven't done your homework. First, there is no doubt that we have been destroying North Viet Nam. Second, it is not the "neighbor". The Geneve agreement called for the unification of the country by July 1956. We alone prevented this, and for a reason that is only disgracefully clear: there was in no one's mind any doubt about the result of the election that was a condition of the agreement and the ending of the war. It is a fiction unworthy of an adult to pretend that South Viet Nam is or can be a separate country. It is beyond our capacity to bring this about, just as it is beyond our capacity to get even those pretending a belief in democracy to lead the apology for a government we have installed and maintained. How do you feel about supporting a man whose open dedication is to Hitler and his beliefs, and even under public pressure refuses to withdraw them? This is "Premier" Ky, installed and maintained by us, and, I might add, supported by you. This is the dedication to democracy and freedom for which we are fighting? It is shocking to me that without exception each and every fascist or other military dictatorship in the world is now our ally. Many of them

installed and maintained, both directly and indirectly, by this government, and this, too, we are told is for the freedom of men and for democracy.

If, as you say, you agree that there should be a negotiated settlement, why do we not hear your voice, loud and clear, calling for this in meaningful terms? The President has done himself, his party (which is also mine) and the country no good in saying he wants "unconditional discussions". First, discussions are not negotiations, and, although the government seems to have retreated from that statement, there remains the "unconditional" part. In the presence of a solemn agreement, the use of the word is in itself an impossible condition except as a minimum demand for surrender, and that, clearly, will not be forthcoming from the side that is a) legally right and b) winning, despite the obfuscations that have become our official policy and the tremendous investment of men, money and materials. The shabby pretense that it is North Viet Nam we are fighting is not calculated to bring about any kind of negotiations, and the explicit refusal of the administration to agree to negotiate with the real enemy, the National Liberation Front, is a clear declaration it is not serious about discussions, negotiations or anything else except an excuse for further and more ghastly escalation of the most shameful military adventure in our history. Among the gaps in your homework, Senator, is the so-called "White Paper", represented by the State Department as proving the infiltration of men and equipment from the North. In itself, this is no way proves the enemy is other than the NLF, but in itself, it actually proves the opposite! The bald lies of the State Department here are shameful. If you doubt the accuracy of what I say, let me know and I'll bring my annotated copy to your office for you or any of your assistants to read.

There is but one honorable settlement, and that is the one already agreed upon. What kind of a world will we be living in if wars are ended by solemn agreements that can immediately be violated by powerful forces which can do this only because they are under such irresponsible control that they are willing to risk the incineration of the world as a consequence, leaving it up to the other side to be responsible and avoid this catastrophy and writing in history that it was they, not we, who were honorable and responsible? The time in which this can be accomplished while still saving any vestige of "face" for us is fast expiring. We can now still get away with the pretense by calling for the immediate and complete implementation of the Geneva agreement and pretending this is what we have been wanting all the time, making it seem like the other side wasn't abiding by it. We can then bow to the inevitable and, I hope, learn a lesson.

But I know, from my own recent studies, that without major changes at home this is an idle hope. I have recently been making a study of false statements by our government, as you, I presume, are aware. In pursuing this in other directions I have just finished "The Invisible Government" and am well into the Schlesinger book. These two alone (and I have consulted other sources) make overwhelmingly clear that the President is the captive of his advisors (as have his predicessors been), that the advisers are ill-informed, venal and often unbelievably wrong, and that they can and do create situations in which there is no control over the policy they create. In Schlesinger alone, you could learn much from reading just those sections dealing with the Bay of Pigs and Southeast Asia. I assure you I have not exaggerated. Between them, the CIA and the military have taken all control of policy away from the President. If they sincerely believe they are doing the right thing, they still cannot be right, for this is not their function, it is the opposite of their proper function, and it is more subversive of our system than anything from abroad can possibly be. Almost as bad, it is self-defeating. And, alas, they have a history of being undeviatingly wrong. Yet, with such a record, we continue to follow them. What can be said of the State Department, which has merely agreed, is no credit to it. They, too, have been consistently wrong. Only our wealth and our might support us. We are, as I am confident you realize, without any significant

support anywhere in the world. What little pretense we can muster is paid for and it comes from our mendicants.

All of this is a sad situation for what we believe in, what we want for ourselves and the rest of the world, and a gloomy augury for our future. How long can such a system as ours continue this way? How long can we publicly debase everything in our history? How much longer can we violate our own beliefs and principles, and tell ourselves we are doing the right thing, that we are being true to ourselves and our principles?

At some point the executive is going to have to take control of the policy-making of the government or we shall have a kind we dont want. This, too, is no idle speculation. Read for yourself Schlesinger's account of how General Lemnitzer spelled out for President Kennedy how our military was going to step by step provoke a war with China. Or how, as President Kennedy learned, the CIA never stopped working to overhtrow the neutrality of Laos, even when it was official policy.

I write you with feeling and at such great length because I fear that we are at a point in history where our wealth and power are not enough to maintain us and where their abuse endangers our system of government. The time when idle words will serve any useful purpose is past. We face an enormous risk abroad, from which there is no possibility of benefit or profit, and as great a danger at home. And in the course of achieving this monstrosity, we have strengthened everything we oppose. We have dignified and credited the Communist countries as they could never have done themselves.

Political expedience may seem to lie in the effort to achieve a middle position. Actually, the forces and disasters that are involved may soon show there is no middle position. Right now meaningful things must be done to change the situation, to bring it first under control and then to terminate it decently. Politicians in the near future will be judged on how they addressed themselves to this. The evasions in your form letter will do neither you nor our party much good by the time you run again, for the situation will be that much different than it is now. The time for taking a clear, meaningful and honest position is now, Senator, before we have to face what we are seemingly irrevocably pointing toward.

And the time for palistives is now also past. Here I refer to your belief that there should be greater emphasis on economic development and social reform. There is no social reform possible under a ~~fix~~ fictituous government headed by an avowed Hitlerite. And there are not enough people and not enough land on our side to benefit from the economic reforms if they are ever instituted. History shows that almost all of this is grafted, and I can tell you stories from my own knowledge of that, too. Remember, Senator, we cannot deliver electricity to Saigon from six miles away. Where are you going to institute these reforms and establish these benefits? Despite our typewriter and adding-machine victories, there is now less territory under our control or that of our stooges than there was before we put a quarter or a million men into this. And remember, even the claims of the State Department, if accurate (and there is nothing in the world, based upon its recent history, to make one believe these claims are accurate), only a minor fraction of themen on the other side come from the North.

I do hope you will see your way clear to face this honestly and squarely, for the sake of all of us - our country, our principles, and your own future.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg